REAPING THE WHIRLWIND.

A NOVEL.

BY MARY ELOISE COMBS.

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CHAPTER V.

"But I will marry my own first love,
With her primrose face, for old things are best;
And the flower in her bosom, I prize it above
The brooch on my lady's breast.

"The world is filled with folly and sin,
And love must cling where it can, I say;
For beauty is easy enough to win,
But one isn't loved every day."

"Aux Italiens" is a dangerous thing to read in some moods. It was dangerous this morning to Jack De Guerry. He knew it, and took malicious pleasure in it. He read on recklessly to the end, never glancing toward the young girl sitting opposite, working listlessly with some bright-colored zephyrs. When he had finished reading, he rose, impatiently tossed the book on the table, and walked across the room. After a moment, he spoke, savagely:

"Lytton succeeded in making a beautiful poem of that, with the proper ending; but he had to sacrifice truth in order to do so. Who ever heard of a 'first love' remaining true through so many years?"

The girl yawned slightly, then answered, teasingly:

"But you must remember, Jack, that the 'first love' in this story is a girl. Of course, if it had been a man, the absurdity of the supposition would have rendered the poem unsalable."

He turned upon her fiercely.

"You may jest as you please, Bell, but you know that most of the sorrow of this world comes through a woman's perfidy."

"I notice that Lord Lytton is particularly careful not to say what was the cause of their 'quarrels and strife': and if the woman had been to blame, he would not have been so magnanimous."

"Yes, he would, because he had forgiven her."

"But he could not have resisted that opportunity of letting her know that he remembered who was most in fault."

Jack whistled softly a moment—a habit of his when he was too angry to speak. As soon as he could trust his voice, he said to her:

"Bell, stop tangling that yarn, and listen to me. How long is this sort of thing going to last?"

No answer. Jack whistled another bar.

"Bell, do you hear me?"

"Yes, I hear you. My hearing is particularly acute for a person of my age. I did not answer, because I was waiting to hear how long 'twas going to last. I suppose you refer to your whistling?"

Jack De Guerry bit his lips till the blood stained them.

"Bell, don't try to put me off. You can't. I have gone too far. 'Tis no new thing for you to hear. You have known for years that I love you. Bell, promise me——"

The girl stopped him.

"There, Jack, be careful. You came within an inch of stepping on Flossie's tail. Do learn to stand still when you talk, if you must stand up, for you make me nervous."

A muttered execration escaped the man's lips—something not complimentary to dogs in general and that one in particular.

"Bell, you have played fast and loose with me long enough. I have acted like a boy instead of a man, and now this is the last time I shall ever ask you. Bell, will you——"

"There! I knew that you would fidget around till you finally tramped on the dog's tail. Come here, Flossie. Poor Flossie!"

Bell leaned down and smoothed the animal's beautiful coat caressingly. A suspicious moisture glistened in her eyes, which if Jack had seen he would doubtless have attributed to her sympathy for her pet's misfortune. As it was, something very like a sneer crossed his lips as he said:

"Send your dog here. I will bind up the injured limb!"

He drew from his pocket, as he spoke, a band of scarlet ribbon, which he had taken from Bell's hair the day before. Calling the dog to him, he tied the ribbon carefully on its tail, then deposited it tenderly on an ottoman near the fire.

Bell's face was crimson. She could have cried with vexation. But Jack should never know how that trifling act had wounded her.

"Thank you. I am glad now that I let you keep the ribbon yesterday. Flossie looks so grateful, too."

The expression on the dog's countenance was certainly one that an ordinary observer would have imagined to be gratitude. Flossie's gratification for its canine adornment was probably equaled by Bell's pleasure at the sight of it.

"You were saying something, Jack, and I interrupted you. Go on."

"Yes, I was saying something—something of very little importance to you, but I am ashamed to say a matter of life and death with me. I have been mistaken, for I thought you cared enough for me to stop flirting after a while."

"Jack, I have told you over and over again that I don't know what love means. I am incapable of it. I haven't what you call a heart. Don't make a scene, Jack. I might cry; then my eyes and nose would be red, and I should look horrid; and I am going out riding this afternoon with Mr. Raymond."

Jack was driven to desperation. He strode up to her, his face white and his voice hoarse with pain and anger.

"Mr. Raymond! I never come in the house now that his name is not flung in my face. Surely, Bell, you are only flirting; you never mean to marry that man?"

Bell's head was drooped, and her face set as hard as a flint, but she made no reply.

The man moved back a pace, folded his arms haughtily, and stood regarding her. A bitter, scornful light came into his eyes, for he had read her answer in her face.

"And you will sell yourself to this man—a pound of flesh for a pound of gold? will stoop to falsehood, keeping love and truth at bay? swear heart and life and soul away?"

Bell had fully regained self-control now, and she looked at him in an inquiring way.

"Jack, what did you eat for breakfast? Hard-boiled eggs, or something equally indigestible? It makes the whole world look heavy and dark to you."

"But not half so heavy as my heart, nor half so dark as my prospects. I could shoot myself for being such a fool as to love a girl who only laughs at me!"

"Don't do it, Jack. It would be so horribly inconvenient to have a funeral in the family in the very height of the season. But, if you insist on suicide, don't shoot yourself in the face, because 'twould make you look so disagreeable, you know, when you were laid out."

"That is the way I look to you the majority of the time, is it not?"

Bell turned around lazily, gazed at him critically, then said, slowly:

"Something ails you beside those hard eggs. Perhaps your boots are tight."

"Your interest in my bodily comfort is as flattering as it is unnecessary. Neither my boots nor my breakfast is troubling me in the least."

Bell evidently had not heard what he was saying, for her attention was directed out the window, and before the sound of his voice had died on the air, she cried out to him:

"Oh, come here, Jack! A kitten is playing with a mouse. She is so cunning! Come quick and see!"

Jack did not stir. Bell looked around to see how he could possibly resist such a rare opportunity for amusement. He answered her, with a look of supreme disgust on his handsome face.

"Thank you; but I have been watching that game in here till it has grown 'flat, stale and unprofitable'."

"Jack, I feel alarmed about you. I think you are going to have a stroke of apoplexy, or some kind of a fever, you look so hot and uncomfortable."

"Under those circumstances, it would be wise for me to retire. I might 'look disagreeable,' or it might be something contagious, and you mustn't run any risk 'in the height of the season'."

He bowed low, with a mocking, contemptuous smile, and turned from the room. Just as he was vanishing through the door, Bell called after him:

"Oh, Jack!"

He looked back gloomily.

"Try and be where you can see Mr. Raymond and me this afternoon."

The door slammed behind the retreating visitor. A moment later he appeared on the walk outside. Bell tapped on the window, but Jack was suddenly struck with deafness. He paid no heed, but strolled leisurely down the avenue.

The great tears gathered slowly in the girl's eyes as she watched the retreating figure. To think that a word, a glance, would recall him, and she must let him go.

"Poor Jack! Dear old Jack! He will never know, he must never know, how I love him!"

Sinking down in her chair, she dropped her head on her arm and shed such bitter, blinding tears as women never tell of; tears that bring no relief to a heavy heart, but scald and burn out belief in truth and in humanity; tears that mark by their course thwarted ambition, blasted hopes, and wrecked lives. Heartless women are made, not born.

There was a sound of softly sweeping garments. Bell heard, and, drying her tears as best she could, she turned her face, for she knew that to escape was impossible, and was apparently deeply interested in the doings of the outside world when her mother entered. Mrs. De Guerry came slowly down the room to the window where Bell was seated, and laid her jeweled hand gently on her head. She was always gentle, but under it all Bell was made to feel that the hand which guided her every step was iron; that she must walk in the path it pointed out, or the velvet glove which covered it would be flung aside, and, if she did not obey unquestioningly its slightest direction, she would be dragged along the desired way.

"My daughter, it is getting late; you must change your morning dress."

"Yes, mamma."

"I saw Jack going away. Why didn't he remain for dinner?"

"I never thought to ask him."

"That was careless, for 'tis almost time. Don't be so heedless another time, Isabell; and now go and dress."

Glad of any excuse to escape her mother's searching eyes, Bell hastened from the room, hoping that her tear-stained and swollen features had not been seen.

But she was mistaken. Mrs. De Guerry saw and understood, but she was far too wise to make any comment. Nevertheless, she made a firm resolution that Jack De Guerry's visits to her house should cease; for there was great danger that he would counteract her influence and disarrange her plans. She sincerely hoped that there had been a quarrel. She believed there had been, and she shrewdly suspected the contemplated ride to have been the cause. She determined to embrace the first opportunity of impressing on Jack's mind the probability and desirability of the marriage of his cousin and Jasper Raymond. She thought that she understood his jealous nature sufficiently to know that he would remain away and let matters take their own course.

"Bell will then be so piqued by his apparent neglect and indifference that she will easily accede to my wishes," mused Mrs. De Guerry.

Having thus laid out her plans and relieved her mind, she settled herself complacently in her chair and waited for dinner to be announced.

What that afternoon ride was to Bell De Guerry, no one except a woman who has been placed in exactly the same position can ever know. She hated Jasper Raymond, who, though the unconscious, was still the immediate cause of her unhappiness; and her hatred was none the less bitter because it was unreasonable. She was conscious of a strong desire to strike him, as in a fit of childish passion, and to shriek in his ears that she hated him—hated him. She even caught herself laughing at the idea of the consternation such a performance would occasion. She tried to figure out, in a stupid sort of fashion, just what he would say and how he would look if she should give way to that almost irresistible impulse. And, through it all, with her bright face and low, rippling laughter, who would have dreamed of the dull, heavy weight that clogged mind and heart? Certainly not Jasper Raymond; it lent new zest to his pleasure to note how she was enjoying herself. Certainly not Jack De Guerry, who, with that craving for self-torture which is one of the strangest traits among all those untold inconsistencies that make up human nature, could not resist stabbing his heart by watching and waiting for them at a place he knew they would pass.

Jack almost hated Bell at that moment—the girl who he believed loved him, and yet, puppet of her mother's will, would marry another man. And then, after all, he thought that perhaps she did care for Raymond. She certainly would not be the first woman who had been guilty of that folly. Even if she had heard that disgraceful story about him—of course, such stories do not injure a man as they do a woman, and money covers a multitude of sins. Besides, she must enjoy riding with him, or she would not go.

Ah, verily, "trifles light as air to jealousy are confirmation strong as proof of Holy Writ."

This suspense was maddening. Jack determined to go at once to Mrs. De Guerry and state the facts plainly; and, although he believed in his heart that his suit would be in vain, yet he felt desperately that the matter must be settled. To send him adrift forever was more merciful than this uncertainty. Besides, he had a strong desire to know what Mrs. De Guerry would say in dismissing the man whom she had allowed to visit her house as her daughter's future husband.

"Yes, Mrs. De Guerry is at home and not engaged."

He passed on to the drawing-room. Mrs. De Guerry rose to receive him, and even extended her hand in friendly recognition. She was in her best humor this afternoon. She smiled as she thought how he was playing into her hands. She spoke graciously.

"Isabell is not at home. She is out riding with Mr. Raymond, as usual."

Her first words threw Jack in a fury; and he had intended to be so cool and collected.

"Yes; I saw them."

That was exactly the thing he had not intended to say.

"Did you? They make a handsome couple, do they not?"

"I didn't see anything particularly stunning in their appearance."

Mrs. De Guerry regarded him with marked disapproval.

"Why do you dislike Mr. Raymond? He is the embodiment of the name 'gentleman.' You are not usually so unreasonable. Why is it?"

"Because he happens to be in my way, I suppose. Men are not usually very charitable under those circumstances."

"In your way? How?"

Jack glared at her a moment, but answered quietly enough:

"By appropriating the time and attention of the woman I love and intend to marry."

Another unfortunate speech for Jack. He was damaging his cause with every utterance. And in proportion as he lost ground Mrs. De Guerry gained it.

"If you refer to my daughter, sir, I command you never to speak of her in that manner again."

Jack threw back his head haughtily, the very action indicating that he was not accustomed to receiving commands.

"I refer to your daughter, madam. And it is a singular fact that 'tis only recently that my speaking of her as my future wife angers you."

"But I have always regarded you as a child. Now that I see that you have become a man, I expect you to put away childish things."

"I have done so, madam: and, among other things, my fear of you."

"You forget, sir, that you are speaking to a lady, and one who has the misfortune to be a relative of yours."

With all his faults and shortcomings, Jack was a gentleman, and he knew this speech to be uncalled-for and rude. He was seized with sudden remorse.

"Oh, Aunt Marian, forgive me! But you nag a fellow to death. I came here to-day to ask for Bell. Will you let her marry me?"

Mrs. De Guerry had been christened Mary Ann; but she did not think that, because her parents had been guilty of a folly, she should willfully perpetuate it. So she altered the low-sounding cognomen to one more suited to her station in life. Heretofore Jack had steadily refused to address her by her self-chosen name, but insisted on calling her "Aunt Ann," a name which filled her high-bred soul with loathing; particularly as he usually remembered the relationship in the presence of some snob, who would elevate his eyebrows and turn away in disgust. She felt now that her victory was indeed complete. She could almost forgive him for his presumption in loving her daughter. Almost—but not quite.

"I think you must know that you will never be able to gain my consent to this ill-assorted union."

"Why didn't you tell me this long ago? I know why, Mrs. De Guerry. You need not take the trouble to answer. It was because you thought me heir to an old man's fortune; and when he died, and a luckier fellow than I was named in the will, you lost interest in me. Ah, madam, the Spanish are right—'There is no lock a golden key will not open.' I can believe that when I see a mother sell her daughter to the highest bidder: when she knows him to be a libertine, a gambler, a *roue*!"

Mrs. De Guerry shrank back in her seat, frightened at the torrent of wrath that flowed from the man's white lips. When she caught breath, she inquired, quite meekly:

"What do you know against Mr. Raymond?"

"I know that his appearance in society here has revived a story about him which New York rung with ten years ago—the story of a woman's weakness and a man's sin."

"But the story was not true, Jack."

"The story was true, Mrs. De Guerry."

"Bring me proof of it, and Isabell shall never marry him."

"Proof?"

"Yes. All we hear are idle rumors. Bring me *proof* that he enticed that woman from her home, and I will never offer another objection to your marriage with Isabell, if in the meantime you will promise me not to say one word to her on the subject of marriage, or repeat this false story to her."

"Mrs. De Guerry, I will promise you, on my word of honor, never to speak of marriage between us, never to mention that man's name to her, till I hold in my hand indisputable evidence that it was for his sake Agatha Wycliffe forgot honor and fled from home. Then, madam, remember my reward."

Without waiting for an answer, Jack De Guerry turned on his heel and left the room.

Mrs. De Guerry was overpowered, perfectly bewildered. She had spoken hastily, without thought of the awful consequences. She had simply intended to bribe him to silence so far as Bell was concerned; and now she had offered him a premium to expose the very secret she was the most interested in hiding. Her hope rested now not on the falsity of the report, but in Jack's inability to prove its truth.

[To be continued.]

FLOWER GARDENS.—The time for seed-sowing has come. Our children must have gardens; they must grow vines, and make the flowers bud and bloom. Nothing will speak so directly to the child-soul as a little flower. It is a teacher of beautiful; a sweet word that Nature has spoken to her children. Some gardens must, of necessity, be small, but no matter for that. A single pot of earth will grow a fine flower; a foot of ground will send out beauty and fragrance. None are so poor to afford so small a patch of earth. In planting your flower-seeds this Spring, do not forget to study the harmony of colors. Put your blue flowers next to orange, your red and pink next to white, and let the plants be of the same height, and you will see some most lovely effects. The finest garden I know in this country owes much of its beauty to the contrast of colors produced by the gardener in the skill with which he arranged his plants. Rows of violet flowers contrast with yellow and scarlet. Clumps of scarlet blooms are surrounded by green or white, and the flowers seem to have a beauty never shown in a garden before.

VENTILATE YOUR CLOSETS.—Soiled undergarments or the wash clothes ought not to be put into a closet, ventilated or not ventilated. They should be placed in a large bag made for the purpose, or a roomy basket, and then put in a well aired room at some distance from the family. Having thus excluded one of those fertile sources of bad odors in closets, the next point is to see that the closets are properly ventilated. It matters not how clean the clothes in closets remain if there is no ventilation that clothing will not be what it should be. Any garments after being worn for awhile will absorb more or less of the exhalations which arise from the body, and contain an amount of foreign—it may be hurtful matter which free circulation of pure air can remove.—*Scientific Press*.

Mrs. Mary N. Bliss, of Columbus, Ohio, has given $10,000 to Kenyon College for the erection of a new hall, to be called "Hubbard Hall," as a memorial to her deceased brother, George Hubbard. The hall is to contain a gymnasium, offices for the President, the Vice-President, and the Treasurer, and a lecture and apparatus-room for the Professor of Physics.